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COMMISSIONER

January 19, 2005

Dear Provider,

Enclosed you will find a draft of the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services Gambling-Free Policy Guidelines and Rationale for your feedback. These will be released as a component of the Bureau's long-term strategy to integrate problem gambling into the BSAS system. As you may remember, in the first release of the Bureau's *Terms and Conditions and Standards of Care* in 2003, gambling was included under *Treatment Needs other than Alcohol and Other Drugs* as an important issue to address in our treatment environments.

The concern is that comorbidity rates can range from 25% to 40% for clients with substance use disorders and problem gambling. BSAS will ensure that every program has policies in place that support recovery from problem gambling and has staff trained to address problem gambling. To this end, the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling has been offering extensive trainings statewide, of which many of you have taken advantage. There are also plans underway to create a Massachusetts-based certificate in problem gambling that will be complemented by a clinical supervision program.

The ultimate goal is to equip all BSAS-funded programs with trained and identified staff who can serve clients with gambling problems, either as a primary, secondary or tertiary diagnosis. The end result will be a group of staff, clinicians and/or administrators identified as Problem Gambling Specialists, who may be able to bill a statewide blanket to fund the services that they are providing to their agencies' clients. I encourage you to participate in this initiative.

The first step is the implementation of a basic Gambling-Free Policy. Please review the attached materials, discuss them with your staff and send us your feedback using the enclosed questionnaire.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michael Botticelli  
Assistant Commissioner for Substance Abuse Services